

THE LEPREGHAUN, OR GOLD GOBLIN.

"Ireland hath been always accounted a land of wonders."—BURTON.

"CLEAVE to the staunch oak, my son," said Jasper Trevenny to a youth who stood by his side in a dillosk-gatherer's* hut. "Cleave to a tight ship, my boy, as long as the wind blaeth, and while she lives upon the waters, she 'll aye be a mauther to thee. Pine not upon a down pillow ashore wi' pale maids and wrinkled beldames bewailing about thee;—but when thee diest, die like a true heart—the white foam for thy winding sheet, the roaring voice of the ocean for thy death-lament, and a noble bark for thy coffin. What can mate with the great sea? Look, thee, my son, it 's beautiful at all times—when it beats against the beach-rocks that hem it in, foaming and raging like a madman wi' his fetters, as well as when the waves be one and all asleep, moving as gently as slumbering babies wi' the broad moon poring like a fond mauther above 'em. What though thee diest, as the Hollanders had like to ha' died an hour aback, in a cockle-shell smack? Even then, thee goest out of the world like a man. You shall hear, brethren," continued the stout Cornish mariner raising his voice as the dilloskers gathered around him. "The brig was scudding away like a sea-bird afore the breeze, and we afearing nought, though 'twas dark as death, having those aboard that knew the course as well as the way to their hammocks, and warranted coming 'thwart o' little 'pon that tack, while the wind spoke Nor' about. Anon the forward look-out, a whistling time after he 'd howled out his dismal 'All 's well,' jumped upon the cable-coil and shouted wi' all his breath, 'Vast! avast! mates,

* The occupation of these people is gathering the edible sea-weeds laver and dillosk, both of which are boiled for use, but a portion of the latter is often dried in the sun, until it assumes a fine ruddy complexion, when it is esteemed a luxury.

helm a-lee and about ship !—a sail a-head here, all hands, yohoy !' Reuben roared, but 'twas too late. A sloop of a thing, wi' all aboard snoring under hatches, lay just neast our bows. We crushed upon her about midships, and rode her down awfully—most awfully, by G—d. A demurrage, for a second, succeeded the shock, and then on we went again as if nought had mattered. She proved to be a Dutch swab, lurking in yander seas for fish—or something richer mayhap. To put about, or bring to, in time for help, was impossible—moreover every sand in the glass was gold to us. But the yawl was out, and three hearties, with the captain himself, and my fool of a boy here, wer' aboard her in a snatch. It got light in the nick, the moon having struck out from her black cloudy harbour into the broad blue sea of Heaven. We tugged aback wi' heart and sinew, but all was quiet and silent above and about the place where she went down, as a grave at midnight, and nought visible but the trailing feather o' foam which the strong brig left astern. I thought I heard a deep screech in the waters' below us—'twas fancy mayhap, but it hit me hard like a bullet. 'Twas just as if my heart heard it afore my ear. It reminded me against my will o' the night when my old father sunk abaft the keel (as we say), long ago. Presently up shot a cask and a few spars, then a shoal of hake, skate, and your beggarly ling, some gasping, others quite dead wi' their white bellies and glazed eyes glittering in the moonlight. We heard a dash and a splutter windward, and upon looking about, to our awful wonder, eyed a little out-o'-sorts creature kicking and spluttering amid another troop o' floating milk-bellies, and laying among 'em wi' his arms, like a windmill in a hurricane. His face was lean, hard, and tawny. It looked like old gold horribly tarnished by time, but age could not wrinkle it. Sometimes he stood aloft, and clamouring knee-deep about in the sea ; then he sunk fathoms, and we saw nought of him for a time again. We were one and all mortally galled at the sight, but the captain. The yawl lay like a log upon the waters, while we stood to glowy at the wonder. Anon, however, the captain doffed woollens, and, dashing among the pieces of wreck that now covered the sea's face, grappled the tawny one, and towed him manfully alongside. Upon hauling him aboard, smite me, cousins, but there was a most enormous Hollander hanging by his legs, and he came up, clumsily wriggling in the wake, like a thumping chub at the tail of a fisherboy's muckworm, ha ! ha ! But I must tellee, the whole crew (three Dutchmen and a black boy) was saved by line or spar, and precious swabbed was the captain about it ; howsomever, just as we 'd hove in sight of your blazing hearth, he tacked about, and bore away like a Geneva pink that has run full upon a king's ship in a fog."

As Jasper Trevenny concluded his tale, the dillosk-gatherers were summoned to front about to the hearth, by the deep voice of their patriarch and Brehon King, old Fergus Consadine the wise. The Cornishman, who had entered the hut with his boy to seek refreshment after landing the Hollanders, now beheld for the first time, as the dilloskers opened on either side, the gaunt old monarch of the beach. Although reposing on the oak-log, which had been the throne of his predecessors for ages, it was plain, that, when erect, he towered far above even those of surpassing stature who gathered around him. His huge legs, encased in dark brown leather trowsers instead of the custo-

mary hose, wandered along the floor, seeming like the main roots of a giant oak in its senility, than the limbs of a man. His mantle of yellow frieze*, curiously embroidered at the edges, was thrown entirely from one shoulder, so as to reveal the bandel cloth vest, and studded bark belt beneath it, and streamed down in great plenitude of fold to the base of his oaken throne. His long hair was turned back in the ancient Glibb or Cooleen fashion, and surmounted by a burred or conical woollen cap : moreover, it was of so peculiar a complexion and wavy a nature, as (like the bard's of old) to be compared to a living stream of milk. His large features, worn as they were by time and mischance, bore an imposing similarity to a mouldering ruin of which sufficient masses remain to shew what it had been in the days of its glory. The transient smile upon the one, as the passing sunbeam upon the other, illumined but to expose. A wreath of the red sundried dillosk-weed, mingled with old laver, encircled his brows, and while his bony left hand wandered lovingly among the light tresses of a sleeping girl, he supported its fellow on one of the bends of a huge black staff, warped and scotched by nature or art into the figure of a snake. This was the Brehon King's sceptre, the symbol of his authority, and all in his domains paid implicit obedience to the laws promulgated by him who wielded it, for the time being, on the oaken log of ages. Tradition and legend were fertile in its honour, but neither Bard nor Shanaghos could narrate the story of its mysterious origin. The general belief was, that it had been vital, and would again resume its pristine nature, to the infinite peril of man, if ever the old Tanistry laws and Brehon Kings should be banished from Erin.

“ My sons,” said old Fergus to his attentive dilloskers, “ you have heard enough from the Sassenach, to put every young limb among you in motion. Far be it from one who sits on the oak of old times, to rise up against the festivals which our fathers rejoiced in and honoured—above all, so sacred a one as that of the Wren on the holy tide of Saint Stephen—may the Bancointha† wail over poor Onagh, the dear child of my child, when I do so ! But, my sons, the honours of the day are done—you have ensnared the kingly little Wren on the brown furze—you have enthroned him in the green holly bush, set off with white love-knots and the fair tresses of your most comely virgins ; you have carried him far and near in glory and state, and lastly, raised him above your broad board while feasting on what men have bestowed on you, as homage and gift to the king of all birds‡. ’Tis now near unto morning, and the reign of the Wren is over. Bestir yourselves, boys. Misfortune has come upon a crew of strangers on your coast. They are now, perhaps, watching with eager eyes for the remains of

* The choice colour of the old Irish.

† The praises of the dead are sung prior to interment by the Bancointha or Cointaghaun, who is hired by the friends of the deceased for that purpose. A similar custom prevails among the Greeks. *Les pleureuses publiques* are mentioned by Pouquerille, in his *Voyage en Morée*, and there seems to be but little difference between their occupation and the Bancointha's. The whole ceremony of a burial, as described by him, approaches remarkably near to a rural wake and funeral in Ireland.

‡ The Wren feast is still kept up in Munster with the ceremonies detailed by the Brehon.

their wreck on the morning tide. They may lack a brotherly hand to aid them. Away then, all of you—prove yourselves strangers to the cursed blood of inhuman Kerry, and my blessing be on his head who proves first in the good work !”

The young dilloskers tumultuously rushed out of the hut as old Fergus concluded, and hurried on towards the beach; young Paudrigg Dooley, the swiftest of foot among them, taking the lead. Christy Scanlon, the next in repute for speed, as usual, outstripped the mass of his companions, and trod close upon the steps of Paudrigg. On emerging from a little valley dingle that broke abruptly upon the beach, he came on a sudden in full view of the timorous Dooley, not in high action as he had expected, but pale and motionless as a wind-bleached hill-rock. “What happened you, Paudrigg?” was the young dillosk-gatherer’s first question on reaching his fellow. “Is it elf-struck ye are, man? or has one of old Finn’s giants been down from the Sliabh and scared you? or maybe the heart’s kilt in your body by the cruel kiss of a wave girl:—Avoch! avoch! he’s dead dumb!” “Husht! husht! asy, Scanlon,” whispered Paudrigg; “asy, boy Christy, and look above there.” “Where? what?” eagerly inquired the youth. “Now see him,” replied Paudrigg, “across the crake to the right of the bushes where the ship struck, and all died long ago when the sea flowed up to the glynn. It’s the spirit of a father cursing the rocks that wracked all his little ones.” “Powers, now I have him,” shouted Christy; “the spirit of a father, said ye?—Paudrigg, ye’re a fool—a canbeen entirely, boy—It’s a gold spirit!”—“A Lepreghaun?”—“Ay that is he as sure as Maccoul built the Binguthan—’tisn’t the first myself saw.”—“Will we be able to get a clutch at the treasure he watches, think ye?”—“Maybe yea, maybe nay,—but look, Paudrigg—by the holy Lough Darragh* the creature’s vanished.”—“My grief then! he heard us, Christy, and sure enough he’ll build up a whole legion of rocks in a minute, twin brothers to the one he stands by, and we’ll have no mark of his station.”

The whole body of dillosk-gatherers had by this time joined the two youths, and drank with greedy ears the residue of their discourse. “But was it indeed a gold goblin, think you, Paudrigg?” “As sure as you’re a simpleton, Dinnis,” replied Dooley to the inquirer; “Christy himself said it was. The crature tallied to a hair with the song in the wake mummary—an’t I right, Christy?”

“Aged and warped, and yellow was he,
As the dry dead leaf beneath the tree,
On a crooked root he shivering sat,
’Till scared by the moth or flapping bat,
Then round and over the gold grave shot,
As if whirl’d by winds—but left it not;
’Twas a miser’s ghost, a Lepreghaun,
Whose doom is to watch from dark till dawn,
By the brown turf shroud where his own gold lies,
And keep it by craft from mortal eyes.”

* Lough Darragh was always accounted holy. In a copy of the articles of faith which, it is said, was found in the pocket of priest Murphy, who was killed at the battle of Arklow, the 26th article runs thus, “We are bound to acknowledge the lake in the north to be holy, called Lough Darragh.” St. Patrick’s purgatory is situate on a small island in the lake.

“I know ’twas a Lepreghaun,” concluded Paudrigg; “and mark me, boys, there’s coin in the crags.”—“Coin!” said Jasper Trevenny approaching; “coin in the crags yander? What dost prate about? Coin indeed! Why thee’d sooner find coin in a tin-shank.” There was a lurking expression in the Cornish mariner’s face which told the dillosker, that notwithstanding his sneering tone, he would willingly be convinced of the probability of discovering a treasure, even on the rough unpromising skirts of the glynn; and Dooley, who was unaccustomed to the pleasure of being attentively listened to, immediately entered into an elaborate detail of all the old proverbs and pithy rhymes current on the subject. Jasper continued to sneer, and interrupted the dillosker from time to time by exclaiming, “Oh! thee’rt mazed, mun, clean gone, a fool, mazed as a wether.” Nevertheless he moved with huge strides towards the creek. Christy in vain attempted to restrain his countryman’s injudicious exposure of the gold grave “to a Sassenach, who, by the look of him, would just murther a worm for the sake of his hide and fat. It was a sin in the face of the country—so it was—to let a stranger share in the rich produce of the soil; meat and drink all were welcome to, but a Lepreghaun’s gold none ought to touch but a Milesian.”

The creek was forded with little difficulty, and, on reaching the crags, the party took different paths, and earnestly sought out the treasure grave. Paudrigg thought that the rocks were prodigiously multiplied, and the sand (which appeared to have been recently disturbed in different places) he asserted was dug up by the wary Lepreghaun and his manifold fellow sprites, for the purpose of bothering them. Christy said nothing; but, observing the Cornishman preparing to seek round the little rock, which he felt assured had been the goblin’s temporary resting-place, the passionate youth violently wrested a small hatchet from the belt of Paudrigg, and proceeded to cut up the hard gravel and sand with such energy, as to attract the undivided attention of his anxious companions. In a few moments his edge sunk deep in the side of a coffer, which lay buried in a cavity at the root of the crag; a few vigorous blows shattered the oak, which verily proved to be a gold-coffin.

All was mute. Trevenny was the first who broke the long silence, by unconsciously uttering a short prayer, as Christy with a trembling hand dragged forth a large heavy untanned bull’s-hide bag, from which the eloquent voice of gold emanated at every jerk.

They soon regained the dillosk-hut; and no sooner had Scanlon thrown this precious load upon the board, than Trevenny attempted to sever the thongs which bound its mouth. His knife was keen, but the tough hide altogether defied its edge; and the irritated Cornishman growled forth a tremendous oath, as he suddenly drew his blade athwart the bellying side of the gorged bag. A flood of tarnished silver and gold, mingled with precious stones, (some of which were naked, and others richly encased) streamed from the gash. Jasper gazed in ecstasy upon the glorious spectacle for a moment. He then thrust a handful of the coins into his bosom, and bathed his rough face in the mass. “I never was so freighted in my life,” said he, appearing to be totally unconscious of the dillosk-gatherers presence. “Mine, all mine—right Jacobuses, and true gold too, by Saint Joes.” He next proceeded to

replenish the bag ; but Christy and his companions, who had hitherto stood motionless, although by no means indifferent spectators of the scene, suddenly rushed forward with one accord, and laid hands upon the treasure. " Ah ! what ! " roared Trevenny, " Hands off, you devils ! Pouch paws, I say, by blood else you 'll rue it. An' poison me but I 'll scat the first he that meddles wi' a dollar dead upo' the planchin." At that moment the door of the dillosk-hut began to tremble upon its hinges, and opening slowly to its full extent, at length revealed a stunted, gaunt-looking, yellow-visaged figure, tottering athwart the threshold.—It was the Lepreghaun !

All eyes were at once fixed upon the goblin, who advanced slowly towards the board, and laid his brown palm upon the naked arm of Trevenny. " What ! flesh and blood after all ? " cried Jasper, as the Lepreghaun touched him. " Why mun, I counted 'pon seeing a pixy at least, instead o' thou, my dainty bait-worm. What's come o' the Hollander porpoise we fished up in your wake, mun, eh ? "—" We parted," replied the supposed gold-goblin, to the amazement of the dilloskers, " we parted on the beach—may he be as 'successful in his quest as I have been in mine ! "—" Quest ! thine ! What's thee prate about, 'oosbert ? " asked Trevenny.—" This—ay—this is my gold," firmly replied the diminutive creature.—" Thine ? " quoth Jasper, " thine ? ha ! ha ! why thee 'rt witless. It's a godsend, my chap, a fee, finder's chattels afloat."—" I buried it," resumed the supposed sprite, " beneath the glynn craggs, seaman, on the day when, in the extravagance of my affection, I endowed an unworthy nephew with the bulk of my possessions, and demeaned myself to sit as a guest at the board where I might rightfully have presided as lord of the feast. I was soon punished for my folly, cruelly punished by the misdeeds of him in whom I had placed my hopes. The allurements of the harlot, the wine-cup, and the gamester, were too mighty for his youth. The old gold flowed in streams from the fountain-coffers of his ancestors ; his broad lands passed away from his possession, and the plough of the stranger furrowed his hearth. Shame for his guilt at length drove him from the land of his fathers, to wander an outcast upon the face of the earth. What had I to do in Erin then ? I left the land in madness, and heeded not my buried gold. I return a pauper, bitterly sensible of its value in all parts of the world, and solemnly claim my own. It is equally valuable to me now with the very blood of life."—" Come, thee 'st a good running tackle," said Jasper ; " the coin o' thy tongue's mint may pass current enough wi' clods, but it melts not Trevenny. Harkye, chap, so I suppose thee wast coming for thy gold across the seas ? "—" In the frail vessel which you ran down last night in the roads. Wearily have I sought for my coffer since you put me on shore."—" Sure ! " quoth the Cornishman. " And pray who bees the rogue of a nevey thee tell'st about."—" His name," was the reply, " is well known here—Morty Quann."—The Cornishman staggered—" Quann ! Morty Quann ! " shouted he, " Blood, Sarrah, how so ? Quann, say'st thee ? Here's a land-shark, my cousins. He wants to berogue us wi' lies and what not. Let un swim, shall he ? Let un float in a sieve, or a torn podger, shall he ? We mustn't be gallied out o' the gold so, brethren. This is the little nestle-tripe we hoisted out o' the brine to-night, cronies."—" We ! " said the other petulantly ; " say

not we, fellow. To your chief I owe my life ;—but for you—I might have perished before you would have thrust out a straw to aid me in my mortal strife.” “What, Sarrah !” cried Trevenny, his brow assuming a deeper red ; “this to Trevenny of Lostwithiel ?—Jasper Trevenny that was hunted from home for his milkiness in the matter o’ float-flesh ? Stand aback, cousins—stand aback—I’ll pitch un half way to Penzance at a jerk.” As he spoke, the passionate Jasper moved round the board towards the old man, who, terrified at his threats, hastily retreated to the vacant Brehon throne, and, leaping upon it, loudly called upon the dillosk-gatherers for protection. “Save me, my sons,” said he, “save me from the knife of the robber. Visit not the sins of my nephew upon me ;—forget, if you can, that your patriarch’s grandchild was a victim to his guiles. Give me a weapon at least ! Does no one stand out ? Are ye Irishers ? Is there not one of my old faction—not a single O’Dwyer among ye ?” —“My mother was one, Sir Morough ; for him I take you to be,” shouted the tempestuous Christy Scanlon, “and by her death-blessing I’ll be with you to the last of my life. Hear that now, and come on, all of ye.” The dilloskers stood irresolute. The sight of the gold and jewels ; the sudden appearance of old Morough, whom they at first feared as a Lepreghaun ; and the daring manner of Trevenny, had completely overpowered them. For a moment their passions were stagnant, and Jasper was just about to grapple with Christy, when a pale girl, on whose handsome features present joy appeared to be struggling with the memory of by-gone grief, followed by a tall figure, in the ruddy prime of manhood, glided like a spirit into the hut.

A glance from the manly stranger instantly subdued the sturdy Cornishman, and the pale young beauty having taken down the wren-bush from the low roof, and placed it on the floor in front of Christy, began to chant one of the verses which are still used by the merry wren-boys when they “sound for collection along.”

“On Saint Stephen’s day, the little king bird
In his green holly bower is always heard,
Claiming homage and gift from maids and men :—
Heart-cankered be they who frown on the Wren !”

This fearful malediction from the honored grandchild of the old beach king, poor Onagh, the spendthrift’s victim, effectually smoothed the knotted brow of Christy. Meantime Trevenny endeavoured to palliate his guilt, by stating the cause of the uproar. “At last,” concluded he, “my little hero said without a stammer, but outright and full as I speak it, that you, even you, Morty Quann, was the roguish nevey he’d been prating about. That was too much, Captain, I couldn’t pouch it, to say nought of his beslaving me :—so you see—” The Cornishman’s speech was here cut short by an exclamation of joy from the old man, as he staggered into the arms of Morty—for Morty himself the stranger was—“My preserver ! my kind-hearted, brave, forgiven boy,” said Morough, “Do I indeed owe my life to thee ? Bless thee, Morty—bless thee—bless thee !” —“Procure my pardon from Fergus Consadine, uncle,” said Quann, bowing to the revered Brehon king, who had just re-appeared, “and let Onagh share your blessing as my bride. I shall then be as happy—” “Thy bride, Morty !” interrupted Morough.—“We have plighted troth together

this night upon the beach," replied Quann. "'Twas little she thought I stood breathless at her side, listening to the song she sang, while she stood by the sea's edge, pondering so deeply (upon me perhaps too) that the white foam glimmered upon her brow unheeded. Her words would have won a harder heart than I can boast of, with all my guilt. You shall hear them, uncle. Do you listen also, king Fergus, and prepare both of ye to give my Onagh joy of her reclaimed and penitent spendthrift as the last word melts away on her lips." The moment was critical, and the bashful Onagh instantly placed her hands in those of Morty, and chanted with a faltering voice the following simple rhymes.

" I smile by day, for the old man's sake,
 Although my heart 's at sea,—
 With the flowers all night I weep and wake,
 They seem to pity me.

My kinsmen say, he was virtue's foe,
 And ruder than the sea;
 But what care I, when well I know,
 He once was kind to me?"

Old Fergus listened with tears in his eyes to young Onagh's song, and joined Morough O'Dwyer in a hearty benison on the heads of the happy plighted ones. The hut then became a scene of joyous uproar. The rude dilloskers pressed around Morty, and loudly welcomed him to his home again. Onagh sat silent and happy, reposing on the bosom of Fergus beneath the wren-bush, while old Sir Morough distributed largesse from his treasure-bag among the beach-boys. Even Trevenny was not forgotten by the kind forgiving old man, notwithstanding he had just aggravated his precedent delinquency, by churlishly observing that "Fortune, in throwing Sir Morough on his native shore, and putting gold in his palm again in his extreme old age, had played the part of the fickle fishwife, who, in a fit of humanity, pitched the mackerel into his natural element, after she had gutted and pickled him." The Cornishman was, however, summoned to approach the board and take his allotted portion of the treasure; but he declined accepting the proffered gift, and turned towards the youth with whom he had entered the hut, a mischievous half-lunatic elf, the eternal cause of sorrow and anger to Trevenny, who patiently endured his manifold misdeeds; "seeing," said he, "that the cursed 'oosbert lost his wits by a blow from my old father's tough staff that was properly levelled at my own head; and if I won't stand by the imp, and bear wi' his folly, who on the wide seas would, I wonder?" The youth was occupied in draining a vessel of meadh, and Jasper urged him to prolong his draught, by roaring this old Cornish drinking-catch in his ear, with all the mirth and carelessness of one in whose presence nothing extraordinary had lately occurred.

" Drain the jug, drouthily,
 Tipple boy, tipple boy;
 Lay to it mouthily,
 Swigging boy, swigging boy;
 Warm it now nosily,
 Rosy boy, rosy boy,
 And be not outfaced by brown ale."

A.